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This is a translation of

Owari no Kakeru

, or, in English,

Fragment of the End

, one of the two official Persona 3 light novels (the other being Shadow Cry). As a disclaimer, I don't pretend to be a professional translator. My Japanese is pretty basic, and above all, this is translation practice for me, and its main goal isn't perfection (though I'm trying to be accurate) so much as to create a serviceable translation so that people who don't have access to the novel or understand the Japanese language can read it. So this translation is probably imperfect, and others could probably do better.

This book mainly revolves around Akihiko, though Mitsuru, Shinjiro, and (to a lesser extent) Yukari also play a pretty hefty role.

Fragment of the End

Owari no Kakeru

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With a snap, a crack ran through a bluish-black mask.

The mask was attached to a black Shadow attempting to flee.

Shadows.

It was true that they weren't human at all, but monsters.

This Shadow didn't even have anything that resembled a torso.

Its body was like black ink that had spilled out onto the floor, its dark, unformed body rising out of the inky void and trying to slip back into the safety and camouflage of darkness like a true shadow would.

"It's getting away!"

A leather-gloved hand, closed tightly a fist, jutted upward, glancing off the floor.

Knowing that the Shadow could sink into the night at any time, Akihiko forcibly drove the Shadow back with numerous blows to its body.

"Time to finish this!"

Akihiko's fist cut through the air. Completely devoted to his cause, and knowing nothing of defeat, his fist hit the Shadow's mask between the eyes.

The Shadow's mask loosened, its mouth becoming slack and turning into a indescribable, death-like hole. A single, fine crack ran between its chin and forehead, and countless other small fissures ran throughout the mask.

Then, the mask shattered.

The fragments scattered, falling to the floor and turning into sand. The sand danced through the air, dissolving into dust and finally fading away in a glow of phosphorescence. The rest of the shadow disappeared in the same way.

The shadow defeated, Akihiko Sanada immediately relaxed his fists.

Vigilantly, he surveyed the area.

The colors of the walls seemed to give the impression that they were at the end of the school corridor, and the floors had the same school-like feel.

However, whatever this place was, it couldn't possibly be a school.

The floors were slanted, the walls distorted and surrounded by twisted pillars—the sensation alone threatened to drive one mad.

From the outside of a nearby window, the world was green. This one hour was known as the "Dark Hour."

Every night, starting at midnight, the Dark Hour began. Only a small fraction of individuals possessed the ability to experience it. It was filled with strange beings known as Shadows that lived concealed within the hidden hour.

"It seems like there aren't any other enemies nearby."

Akihiko let out a deep breath; however, his rough breathing refused to lessen.

Akihiko might have been the proud, undefeated boxing champion of Gekkoukan High School, but fighting human opponents and fighting Shadows were two entirely different things. His shoulders felt heavy with fatigue.

In order to work the tenseness out of his body, he stretched lightly, the gun belt clinking at his waist.

He glanced at the holster hanging about his waist.

"Even this thing feels heavy. Maybe I am getting tired."

"It seems like you're breathing hard. Are you all right?"

A communicator was clipped behind his left ear, and the interference mingled with what seemed to be a woman's voice. Even though her tone was similar to a man's, the woman's voice was cool and steady but also filled with trust and concern.

Slowing down his breathing as much as possible in order to be able to hear her voice more clearly, Akihiko put his hand on the communicator.

"I can still go on, Mitsuru."

He was talking to his partner, Mitsuru Kirijo.

Like Akihiko, Mitsuru was also a second year at Gekkoukan High School, and was the beloved daughter of the President of the Kirijo Group, a company that held considerable clout within the Japanese economy. As Gekkoukan High was also affiliated with the Kirijo Group, many of the school's faculty and staff, and not only its students, held Mitsuru in high esteem, treating her with particular reverence.

However, to Akihiko, Mitsuru was far more than just the founder's beloved daughter: Mitsuru was of the few individuals he was able to put his complete trust and faith in. Because of this, he didn't bother to hold back his words.

"If I think I'm overdoing it, I'll retreat. So try not to worry too much."

"Understood."

The corridor Akihiko stood in made up only a fraction of the maze's considerable dungeon. Every evening, at the beginning of the Dark Hour, the school would contort and change. From the outside, it looked like a maze. It could be said that those who attempted to explore its many floors would find it impossible to return if they did not record the way.

Without Mitsuru's support, Akihiko would have become easily lost, like a child, and becoming lost in a place like this would inevitably lead to death. So Mitsuru was, so to speak, Akihiko's lifeline.

"I'm going to go on ahead. Wish me luck."

"Please do not do anything unreasonable. You may proceed, but please remember that you are still exploring this place alone."

"I know."

No longer preoccupied with Mitsuru's words, Akihiko began to carefully advance.

The passageway was dim. At best, one could only see about ten meters ahead. Everything beyond that was a dark, still gloom.

Given that one had to be able to deal with the unexpected at anytime, Akihiko straightened his posture, lifting his shoulders and deafening his footsteps as he continued to walk.

Soon the corridor opened up into a crossroads.

On the other side of the wall there was a blindspot where a shadow might be lurking—

Using caution, but moving quickly and boldly, Akihiko jumped to the point

where the passageways intersected.

"Nothing's here, huh?"

There wasn't even the slightest hint of an enemy here. Exhaling, Akihiko relaxed.

Then, something moved in the darkness ahead.

"Huh?! A Shadow?!"

In a flash, he approached the passageway, ready to take on whatever challenge that awaited him, but stepped back as the murky silhouette lurking by the wall fled.

Carefully, so as to not aggravate the enemy, he moved forward. Feeling its presence nearby, he peered into the passageway.

"Is that... a human?"

In the darkness, he spotted a pair of knees.

Then his eyes found two thin white legs—barefoot. They perhaps belonged to a delicate woman or a child.

Could there be a human-type of Shadow around here, too?

Muttering to himself in order to calm his mind, Akihiko gazed at the white feet.

There have always been many different types of Shadows, from the wild, slime-like one he just defeated, to countless others.

There were Shadows that reminded him of birds, some that looked like beetles, and others that resembled beasts.

There was no doubt Shadow's could take on a variety of forms.

So could there not be a human-like Shadow, as well?

What should I do? Should I make the first move?

He hesitated, and suddenly the legs moved, as if ignoring his thoughts. Then, they vanished into the darkness.

Akihiko jumped back reflexively before running to the point where the

humanoid figure had once been and stopped. He was now at the heart of the crossroads.

He could not see the mysterious human-like shadow anymore.

"What in the—what

was

that?" That human-like figure from just moments ago. Akihiko grimaced.

Then, he sensed an intense thirst for blood.

The air groaned, and sharp nails the size of rakes tore at his flank.

The strike would have been more than enough to tear away his clothes, and had he hesitated an instant more, he would have had a large, gaping hole in his side.

"That was careless of me!"

The assailant was the same type of Shadow he had defeated earlier, known as Cowardly Maya, and this time, there were more than just one, as if they had all gathered together to avenge their fallen comrade.

Akihiko didn't even have time to adjust his stance.

He leapt backwards, hoping to buy himself some time as he pulled an object out of the holster at his waist.

The word "

S.E.E.S.

" was etched on the steel, and it took the shape of an automatic pistol.

It was Akihiko's greatest tool, able to summon a force far more capable to deal with Shadows than he was alone.

The tool was known as an Evoker.

As he landed, he put the muzzle of the Evoker to his forehead and pulled the trigger without even an instant of hesitation.

"It's your turn, Polydeuces!"

A blast of power surged through his forehead, and a metallic sound

reverberated around him. Instead of blood, blue debris similar to thin blue shards of ice scattered around him, turning into bright fragments of light as they disappeared.

In front of Akihiko, a strange, alien figure manifested.

Its body was disproportionate by all accounts, thin, but covered in bulging and well-developed muscle. The figure's right arm was tipped with a gigantic needle, and the figure's long golden hair was reminiscent of lightning. In height alone it was double the size of Akihiko.

Persona.

That was what they were called. It could be said that they were an embodiment of a miracle.

This one's name was Polydeuces, and, as far as Akihiko was concerned, Polydeuces was just another piece of himself.

"Go!"

In response to Akihiko's spirit, Polydeuces turned, muscles bulging, and with a thunderous roar, Polydeuces lifted an arm, ready to bring down a Thunder Hammer onto his enemies.

Lightning attacks were, after all, one of Polydeuces' special abilities.

And then, out of thin air, lightning rained down in a shower of sparks. In a single moment the Shadows' masks were demolished and their bodies turned to ash, vanishing several seconds later.

Then, Polydeuces did likewise.

"Guh."

Evoker clasped in his left hand, Akihiko fell to one knee.

Summoning a Persona was always extremely taxing both physically and mentally. And as his body had all ready experienced a great deal of strain, he was all ready extremely tired.

"Akihiko. That was more than expected."

He heard Mitsuru's voice buzz over the communicator. He could understand what she was trying to say between the lines.

"I think it's about time to pull out of this place. ...I'll be withdrawing."

Forcing his heavily fatigued body to move, Akihiko left the labyrinth behind.

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Soon Akihiko was at the exit. At the bottom of the stairs, he spotted a motorcycle—Mitsuru's—fitted with a variety of communication equipment and technology. By its side, Mitsuru stood, clad in her Gekkoukan highschool uniform.

The motorcycle was Mitsuru's preferred method of transportation, and as its owner and as a matter of course, she was the one who drove it.

"Your safety is what's most important. I apologize for the trouble I put you through."

Mitsuru's words were firm as usual, but he could sense the gratitude and relief in her voice.

However, Mitsuru's expression immediately became stern.

"Akihiko, I don't think I can allow you to explore this place alone any longer. It's too dangerous."

"Is this about tonight's—" he began to say, but stopped. By all rights, no one should go into such a strange and hostile place alone. Akihiko understood that.

But he had wanted to try. To do things on his own. Prove his own power.

But right now, the results just weren't acceptable.

"You're right. I could have been attacked again as I retreated, and that could have been dangerous. I'm still not strong enough. I need to train more. Then we can try again."

He showed looked down at his clenched fist—it was the source of his strength,

but it wasn't enough, and Akihiko knew it.

Looking at Akihiko, Mitsuru's face suddenly clouded.

"You're pale. You look like you've seen a ghost."

A ghost, huh?

It was because of that Shadow. He still remembered its pale white feet.

"Maybe I did. There was something in there that looked almost human."

"Almost human?' You mean you saw a human-like Shadow?"

Mitsuru looked dubious.

To be honest, Akihiko still wasn't even sure if what he had seen was real or not. Now that he thinks back on it, the whole situation

was

pretty suspicious.

"I'm not sure. I tried to check, but I lost sight of it when it ran further inside."

"If it fled there, whatever it is you saw probably wasn't human."

"Hey, it could still be a ghost." Akihiko lowered his voice, and looked back over his shoulder.

The night sky of the Dark Hour gave off an ominous green glow.

The tower stood tall in the distance, looking like a toy bunch of irresponsible children had put together haphazardly.

Still, Akihiko eyed it sharply. So far they had only been able to explore a small portion of the tower, confined to its lower floors.

"We'll make our way through it all eventually."

"Of course. That's what we're fighting for."

Mitsuru nodded from next to Akihiko, a gun holster also wrapped around her waist. She had an Evoker, too, inscribed with the word

S.E.E.S.

within. Mitsuru also used it to summon her own

Persona.

S.E.E.S.

The letters stood for Special Extracurricular Execution Squad.

They operated under the guise of a highschool club, but in reality,

S.E.E.S.

was a group for Persona users.

They wore a red bangle that read "

S.E.E.S.

", just like their Evokers, as proof of their membership.

Their goal was to put an end to the Dark Hour and the Shadows that inhabited it, while solving the mystery of the tower before them.

"Tartarus."

That was what the tower was called.

It took its name from the underworld of Greek Mythology. It was irrational and chaotic, and home to unnatural, otherworldly beings.

Its existence was an irregularity. It could be said that it was a tower from a completely different world that just so happened to materialize in their own.

Every night, Gekkoukan Highschool would change upon the arrival of Dark Hour, morphing into Tartarus.

The green night was a symbol of it.

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